TWO LETTERS TO THE WHIGS OF THE CAPITAL.

LETTER I.

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TO THE

WHIGS

OF THE

CAPITAL.

PERMIT an humble individual to expreſs his unfeigned joy, at beholding ſuch a group of citizens united in the cauſe of their country.

But as every joy to be laſting, ought to be tempered with reaſon, I am deſirous of recommending to your conſideration, the laying a ſkilful foundation, on which your proceedings can be uſeful, on which alone you can raiſe your country's freedom and greatneſs.

Without diffidence, I give it as my opinion that the principle now to be recommended is much too far over-looked. Where defects have been interwoven

woven in a well intended inſtitution, and where the ſmall remains of vitality it poſſeſſed, are almoſt wholly extinguiſhed, it muſt be a circumſtance of equal ſurprize and regret, that partial propoſitions for ſuch deep ſeated defects, ſhould be adopted without heſitation, and purſued with avidity: A few ſpecific meaſures are offered as a cure for all our political evils, and we are ready to grant, that the abrogation of ſome obnoxious ſtatutes, and the adoption of half a dozen others more favourable to freedom, will make us content and happy; but do you, Gents. who are uſed to the ſilent and ſober admonitions of reaſon, accord with ſuch opinions? Do you not rather ſee, that in fixing the key-ſtone, the ſtability of the arch is not attended to, & that as public affairs have been hitherto guided, the meaſures which one adminiſtration reckons uſeful and ſpecific, a ſucceeding one may look on as incongruous and repeal them?

Confined then, as we have been to the narrow policy of our own day, it is time to look beyond its precincts: A conteſt for the repeal of a few Acts of Parliament, ſhould not occupy one moment of our attention: The admiſſion of a few popular characters into power, may for ſuch a purpoſe be advantageous;

vantageous; but why in God's name ſhould we be obliged to rely for the ſecurity of our rights on the perſonal character of a few individuals? Repeated experience ought to convince us, that the beſt characters are not proof againſt the temptations of wealth and power: On ſtatutes that receive their hue from the prevailing faction of the day, as little dependance can be had: To ſay this inſecurity argues no defect in the conſtitution, is perfect nonſenſe.

It is an abuſe of terms to call that a conſtitution, which, containing no principle wherewith to controul a corrupt organization, allows thoſe deriving an authority under it, to become inſtruments of freedom or corruption at their diſcretion: Nor is it from any defect of ideas, that men deny either the exiſtence of a conſtitution, or that what remains of it, while depending for active energy on the perſonal character of its agents, differs in any ſhape from pure and undiſguiſed tyranny. When carried away by high ſounding terms, we talk of a conſtitution, of which, like many abſtract ideas, it is difficult to define the eſſence, or prove the exiſtence. If ever intended as a ſyſtem of political union, conſiſting of three ſeparate and independent parts, at what period of its hiſtory was it ever found to ſubſiſt? At what period would a man, enjoying but the

the ſenſitive privileges of his nature, wiſh to live under it? Like bodies, whoſe parts are continually changing, its external and internal ſtructure was too fluctuating to produce a permanent good. A certain commentator indeed on the laws of England is very deſirous to impreſs a conviction, that the conſtitution in Charles the 2d's time, attained its greateſt perfection. Reaſonably, however, may we reject his opinion, when in the ſame breath he admits it a period of great practical oppreſſion: and what further ſhall we ſay to his principles and authority, who, afraid of meeting the great public queſtion, on which the revolution of 88 was founded, declares, he will not defend either the juſtice, moderation, or expedience of that event, but, like a true lawyer, reſts the whole on authority? To juſtify an act by the act itſelf, is neither logic or common ſenſe: While to complete the caricature, he reſts the chief ſupport of his immortal fabric, on what equally ſuits the deſpotic conſtitution of Pruſſia or Spain, the perſonal virtues of the king. ſo long as princes were vicegerents of the Deity, it would have been impious to refuſe them ſupernatural powers, fitted for their ſupernatural ſtation; but ſince the progreſs of reaſon has diſpelled the charm, and ſevere-taught experience unveiled the naked qualities of princes, we admire

mire the prevalence of paſt error: Greatly and not without reaſon do we ſtill reverence that divine impulſe, which prompts kings, as well as other men, to imitate the benevolence of the Deity and increaſe the fund of human happineſs; yet was it an abſurdity of the firſt claſs, to make that reſemblance general and immutable, which reaſon and divine law only made conditional.

Regarding further the executive branch of this boaſted political union, we find the abſurd peculiarities; of having a magiſtrate limited by law, yet allowing him prerogatives confeſſedly above law; of giving him a power of creating and modifying corporate bodies, and of encreaſing the number of the people's repreſentatives at pleaſure; of granting him the power of making war and peace, and binding the nation irrevocably with foreign ſtates; of granting an immenſe revenue for private expenditure without control or inveſtigation, wrung from the gripe of induſtry, and laviſhly appending to the perſon, what ſhould be ſpecifically appropriated to the office; of ſuppoſing him wholly without folly or weakneſs, which is phyſically and politically falſe, as the reign of every Britiſh king, except the preſent, too plainly proves; of giving him the patron-

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age of ſeveral millions of the public money, which creates an order of men in the community, diſtinguiſhed by their adherence to the perſon of the king, as well as by their giving him an intereſt diſtinct and ſuperior to all the other orders of the ſtate; and of giving him and his miniſters the excluſive privilege of propoſing new taxes, and of arranging, modifying and collecting the entire revenues of the ſtate. If any controul was ever intended for ſuch powers, experience has found it inſufficient: And it is ſurely abhorrent to reaſon, however ſome men reconcile it to themſelves, to appoint checks to the powers of the executive magiſtrate, yet at the ſame time affording him the means, by great wealth and patronage, of deſtroying thoſe checks; the ſame weakneſs we obſerve, in the undiſtinguiſhing attachment ſhewn to the perſon and family of the reigning prince: It mixes with our moſt familiar habits, and is by many received without heſitation, and without waiting the concurrence of reaſon; the prevalence of an error however, can never give it ſanction. It is the office only, which is entitled to reſpect, and which is choſen as the organ for performing certain functions in the ſtate, and for giving a prompt and active efficacy to the more ſupreme will of the people: We worſhip not the ſun of nature,

ture, tho' a ſacred animating ſymbol, as well as a liberal diſpenſer of the beneficent influence of uncreated intelligence. With all thoſe and other powers, ſo hoſtile to freedom, ſhould a prince employ them, to corrupt and deſtroy the independence of the other two branches of the legiſlature, the allegiance of the people is diſſolved. Such encroachments are ſubverſive of all public order, and ought, in equity and good faith to be the meaſure of their ſubmiſſion: even the leſſer prerogatives can never encreaſe, but by a diminution of the people's freedom, and the acquiſition of millions, wrung by the hand of power from the loweſt of the community, is, in the eye of humanity and juſtice, the pooreſt ſupport of a throne; but in what degree holds the connexion between the people of Ireland and their King? comparatively very weak: conſidered as aliens, and fair victims of foreign jealouſy and uſurpation, our abject ſtate is carefully veiled from him, or ſeen by a reflected light, too weak for accurate diſtinction: he is not the father of our people, or hears not our prayers.

Members of this political maſs, ſhall we look on a vain nobility, as adding vigour, energy or ſplendour to it. created by a creature of the people

and wriggling into notice, they provoke only the glance of contempt, and are too inſignificant in their civil character to arreſt attention. An attachment to the ſource of their vain honours might bear ſome appearance of gratitude, could one inſtance in the preſent generation be adduced, of ſuch titles being the reward of perſonal merit. To the poſſeſſors of ancient honours, it muſt be truly humiliating to conſociate with men, whoſe only claim to their fancied dignities reſts in the weight of their purſe, and becoming lords by purchaſe; it is chiefly however as members of a corporation, openly ſoliciting corruption, and not a few of them receiving their daily bread, as placemen and penſioners, from that community they affect a ſuperiority in, wherein we complain of them as excreſcences, as always attached to the crown, and with an infamy, ſuited only to unprincipled and ſavage nature, trafficking their independence for the harneſſed trappings of royalty. Much has been ſaid of their being placed as barriers between the crown and the people; but what are the facts to ſupport, or where is the man that has proved it? from Runnemede, where the aim of the Barons was too free themſelves, rather than the people, from the tyranny of the kings, to the preſent time, have they alone been uniform ſupporters

porters of the throne: and not without reaſon, as knowing from experience, that honourable diſtinctions from the people generally proceed, from a deliberate conviction of private or public merit. Tho' ſo long ſoaring with honours above the ordinary endowments of nature, it is matter of curious enquiry, why providence, which ſo wiſely adjuſts means to their end, and aſſigns to every order of being its proper ſphere, ſhould not long ſince have aſſigned them a place (whether above or beneath, will not be matter of cavil, ſo it be) beyond the rank of vulgar humanity.

Greatly deſirous ſhould we be to look on the other eſtate, as the free repreſentatives of the people. But being originally ill defined, diſcordant and inefficient, unconſcious of holding, or of being intended to hold, the power of the people in a ſtate of concentration, and ſeldom enjoying their confidence, it continued for centuries of ſuch feeble ſtructure, as to bend reſiſtleſs to each ſucceeding tyrant. during their conteſts about the choice of deſpots, for their wars were nothing more, what parliament conſidered as treaſon one day, was the next, deemed loyalty, according to the faction which prevailed: thus plainly confounding and ſubverting the natu-

ral diſtinctions of right and wrong. With a ſimilar diſregard to an exiſting law, did the Engliſh parliament on the death of Elizabeth act, when acknowledging, *on the knee of their hearts*, the indubitable right of her ſucceſſor to the Engliſh throne, in defiance of an unrepealed law, which had excluded him: Thereby giving a king, poſſeſſion againſt law. The middle of the laſt century exhibited a firſt and ſucceſsful exertion of parliamentary power, becauſe ſupported by popular opinion. Not long after, however, do we find it yield to an ambitious uſurper, not of the regal power, for that had been previouſly forfeited, but of the more ſacred rights of the people. Since that period, the original flexibility of the Engliſh Houſe of Commons has continued without much variation: on very few occaſions do they appear as ſtrenuous aſſertors of their country's rights. It is unneceſſary to except a few ſtraggling ſtatutes, which rather ſketch the outlines, than fix the fundamentals of freedom, nor even the revolution itſelf. That act, which arrogantly pretended to bind poſterity for ever to their new fangled kings, ſuited only to the meridian of Turkey, and ſtill ſubſiſts a recorded monument, of the profligacy of delegated power, and of Britain's ſhame. Over Ireland the tyranny of Britain

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ſtands yet unrepealed in our minds, and never it is hoped will be forgotten. Is it then no more? Yes, but we owe it not to Britiſh juſtice.

But to prove that the Engliſh Houſe of Commons either do not believe in the exiſtence of a conſtitution, or hold it in perfect contempt; we need only adduce the inſtance, of their prolonging their own duration to ſeven years, which certainly exceeds the ordinary limits of political depravity.

In this triple headed monſter, ſo heterogeneous in theory, and ſo corrupt in practice, can any features be diſcovered, which would lead us to ſuppoſe, it was ever calculated to promote or enſure the happineſs of the people? Yet it is not only in its internal ſtructure, that imperfections appear: The hiſtory of Europe diſcovers in its foreign connections a turbulence of temper, a fondneſs for war, and a kind of irrational eagerneſs to intermeddle with foreign governments, neither intentionally, nor in its conſequences beneficial to the nation. New conſtitutions, which have the happineſs of the people for their object, claim a deference, even in their defects, becauſe ſubject to the reflexions of maturity and experience; but England exhibits, what is called

a conſtitution,

a conſtitution, hoary without dignity, and deſcending rapidly in years and corruption. But, it is aſked, how do the corruptions of the Engliſh government affect us? Is it not virtually a foreign nation? Would to God it were! Yet to anſwer theſe queſtions, we muſt diſcriminate between the matter of right and the matter of fact. whether virtuouſly or corruptly governed, England ought to be of as little concern to us as the affairs of France; who is, however, ignorant of the fact; that Ireland is governed by Engliſh influence and Engliſh agents; that neither in its collective or repreſentative character does it act for itſelf; that it is in a ſtate of provincial ſlavery, and exceeds even England in corruption?—Alas, poor Ireland, doomed to be the diſgraceful appendage of ſelfiſh foreigners: In no nation of the earth is thy voice allowed to be heard, or thy name reſpected: Neither in the wiſdom or mildneſs of thy laws, nor in the beneficence of thy government, art thou happy: To the brilliant array of thy armed citizens art thou alone indebted for partial reſpect abroad: aided by the perſonal valour of thy ſons, baniſhed from their native ſoil, by civil and religious preſcription ———

LETTER II.

IN forming our connexion with England, one party only was concerned. Originally the work of the Engliſh government, it is conſtantly ſupported by its agents here: and in no ſmall degree by perſons, who diſhonor the character and title of Iriſhmen. In the laws ſtating that connexion, or in that factious reſolution, by which the Iriſh Commons bound themſelves to ſtand or fall with England, the people were not conſulted, and could not ſignify their conſent: Popular meetings moreover being too uncourtly, to know their opinion on a ſubject ſo important to their intereſt and their feelings, they plainly were not committed on it.

If then, Gentlemen, the integrity of the firſt characters in the land afford not the proſpect of permanent ſecurity to freedom: And if a conſtitution, or what is exhibited for one, weak, inefficient, corrupt, and a government more weak, more inefficient, more corrupt, increaſe the political gloom, and exclude every ray of hope, where can the anxious minds of Iriſhmen find ſolace? Well meaning

meaning men have either depended too much on the viſionary ſtatement of our conſtitution, as given by foreigners and by Blackſtone; or have fled to the other extreme, of conceiving its diſeaſes, from the number of morbid deviations to be very complicated, and thence deſpairing to find a remedy for ſuch manifold abuſes. But neither extreme is to be credited: In the one, by truſting to the reality of the painted canvas, how great ſoever the animated ſemblance, we give up the evidence of judgment to the illuſion of ſenſe: And as to the other, we do not require ſupernatural aſſiſtance, both to perceive and correct all the abuſes, attached to our political union: many and various are thoſe defects, and long have they exiſted; yet is it certain that *a perfect repreſentation of the people* would remove them, would deſtroy them.

It is this alone can give to the people, what they never have had, a due æquipoiſe in the ſtate. It is this can ſet limits to the arrogating ſuperiority of the peerage, ſtop the avowed ſale of titles, and prevent the proſtituted application of ſuch ill gotten wealth. By this power may a wanton profuſion of grants, wholly unneceſſary for the expences of one family, and only ſerving as a fund for public proſtitution,

proſtitution, as well as an immenſe and highly improper patronage, be ſo far reſtrained, as not to be noxious to the ſtate; ſuch a power only can check the great unnatural powers of the executive magiſtrate, and ſay, here be the bounds of proud prerogative ſtayed. Nought but this in ſhort, can give durable efficacy to uſefull laws, encourage native manufactures, prevent emigrations, and give an effectual check to inſurrections, by tracing and removing their cauſes.

Without a proper repreſentation,

Ireland will have a venal legiſlature, and a commonalty without labour and without bread: manufactures decaying for want of national encouragement, and ſacrificed to the ſelfiſh jealouſy of foreign monopoliſts; we ſhall continue to abound in laws, numerous, ſevere and arbitrary, — *numerous*; as many years attention is ſcarcely ſufficient to know them: and if laws are intended as rules of conduct for the people, there is ſomething ſtrangely abſurd in having them ſo various in number, ſo difficult to underſtand, and withal of ſuch partial diffuſion, as that the bulk of the people know nothing concerning them: ſo far from informing, they ſeem calculated to miſlead and enſnare, and

might with equal propriety be publiſhed in a foreign language. *Severe*;—becauſe the extent and undiſtinguiſhing ſeverity of the criminal code, and in an eſpecial degree of the revenue laws, is ſo oppreſſive, that no country, even deſirous of freedom, would ſuffer it to exiſt. The official ſervants of the revenue exerciſe in their courts the curiouſly-combined power of trying, determining, and executing the law: their multiplied oppreſſions, joined to the great encouragement held out by high duties to ſmuggling, have taught men to diſtinguiſh between ſimple prohibition, and a crime; between the crime of violating a neighbour's property, and (what appears to them,) the leſs offenſive act of evading the payment of heavy duties, which only ſerve to ſupport the public proſtitutes of power. In ſhort the revenue makes rogues, and then puniſhes them. *Arbitrary*, — arbitrary laws? yes, laws may be ſuch, as, inſtead of conforming to the genius of the people, oppoſe palpably their wiſhes, their wants, and their proſperity: they are literally acts of power, and every act of power, which has not for its object the people's happineſs, is pure tyranny, under whatever form it appear. It is of little conſequence whether ſuch laws originate from

a monſter of 300 heads, or of one head; for with ſo little diſguiſe and difficulty are theſe acts of power obtained, that a very ſubordinate miniſter conceiving, not many years ſince, his inſignificant perſon inſulted by the cenſures of the preſs, procured an act to reſtrain it. But it will be ſaid, this general reaſoning is not applicable to Ireland, as a more particular detail would evince— what then does a cloſer ſurvey afford?

The people of Ireland, we ſay, exhibit a peculiarity unequalled in any nation. Of every other country the majority form the eſtabliſhed religion, and politically and collectively the maſs of citizens; of Ireland 90 of 100 pay heavy taxes, to ſupport a religious eſtabliſhment they are not members of, and four-fifths of them are excluded from the claſs or title of citizens; under oppreſſions grievous and manifold, theſe aliens, politically ſo termed, long laboured, until the reſt of the nation joined them in their wrongs, re-echoing the voice of reaſon and humanity, and government prudently yielded to the general wiſh; a ſtriking proof how feeble are all efforts of power, in oppoſition to the will of a nation. The relief however came ſlowly, reluctantly, and withal was partial

and inadequate. Diſcontent, neither the offſpring of ſect or party, ſtill prevails: in many parts ſhewing only a ſilent, gloomy, yet marked diſſatisfaction at the conduct of publick affairs: in the reſt burſting out into open and avowed inſurrections.

To theſe inſurrections two cauſes eminently point: an avowed hoſtility to the government of the country, or the more prevailing one, a want of employment and of bread. That the inſurgents of the North and of the South, however remote from each other, have but one object, there is much reaſon to ſuſpect: and if from the prevalence of Engliſh influence, or from an obſtinate and criminal adherence to uſages, however long eſtabliſhed, of cruel and impolitic operation; and if from ſuch uſages the primary arts of huſbandry and other uſeful manufactures, continue ſo far checked, as to preclude a wretched peaſantry from labour and from bread; what ſhall be the meaſure of their puniſhment? are they not more unhappy than criminal in their vices? and will the force of ſuperior diſcipline ſubdue them? it may be doubted: the military, as much guided by honor as by perſonal bravery, can never forget, that the title of citizen

citizen is ſuperior to every other, and they will therefore reluctantly point the bayonet againſt wretches driven to acts of deſpair from their ſituation, ariſing (for why ſhould it be concealed?) from a weak and corrupt government. When the diſcontents of a people become clearly known, it requires not the authority of a profound and philoſophic hiſtorian to obſerve, that they always deſerve the attention of thoſe in power: and the want of which, he adds, contributed much to the loſs of royal dignity in the laſt of the Stewart Kings; but how much more ought diſcontents, which have continued in overt-acts of different ſhapes and titles for ſeveral years, to call for a remedy, neither palliative or temporizing; but ſuited to the exigencies of an oppreſſed people, ſpeedy, permanent, efficacious. To a proviſion of their neceſſities, even the loweſt of the community have a claim, ſuperior to all ties of ſubordination: and that government, whether inefficient, indolent or corrupt, which does not provide for ſuch wants, deſerves no longer to ſubſiſt. What then are the neceſſities of the poor? we are ſure at leaſt *education* is not one of them.

To attempt making letters in any country precede the neceſſary arts of life, is perfectly abſurd: 'tis making the firſt cares of man, the means of

of living, ſubſervient to the ornaments of life. In England the genius of art ſeems to have ſuperſeded that of ſcience; there mechanical philoſophy has been of late much and deſervedly cultivated, more however as an art, than as a branch of ſcience; and in both nations, a method of diffuſing a practical knowledge of mechanics, would be eminently uſeful, as leading to the improvement of machinery, and the various modes of ſhortening the proceſſes of labor, by which manufactures might be brought cheaper to market; but does this form a part of a late boaſted plan of education? or will a ſuperficial habit of writing and figures, reach, without further aid, to this ſolid acquirement? experience ſays no— in other countries which boaſts of ſuperior police, reading and writing fill up only a part of the intervals of labor; with them the firſt object of education, is to accuſtom their children to manual labour, when ſcarcely able to hold a pen or liſp a catechiſm. Such habits of honeſt induſtry fulfill the firſt concerns of nature, ſerve eſſentially the ſtate, and as aſſuredly are of grateful homage to their Creator. In that claſs of people we are ſpeaking of, the acquiſition of knowledge, is not ſo much to enlarge the underſtanding, as to form

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good habits, and reſtrain the paſſions, which are more immediately the ſprings of human action.*

But it is aſſerted by many, who willingly paſs aſſertion for proof, that the wretchedneſs of the commonalty of Ireland ariſes from a diſpoſition to idleneſs; this is far from ſatisfactory, or perhaps true. In the infancy of the arts, the people are every where prone to idleneſs, plainly from the want of early habits of induſtry, and of a regular and conſtant encouragement to their manufactures; where this encouragement is wanting, or where it depends on ſuch caſual circumſtances, as the private character of a viceroy, or the faſhion of the day, idleneſs is more certainly the effect of

* Education is to all ranks an advantage: and tho' limited as it ever muſt be in the lower orders of the people, they will become better men. The practice of morality is in general proportioned to the ſtrength of underſtanding; as it requires an exertion of reaſon to give ſtability to virtuous principles, which therefore appear very faint in ſavage life. In the claſs of people however we are ſpeaking of, early and regular employment, ſeems the beſt education: and it appears plain, that ſome eaſy acquired habits of labor would better ſuit the children of the different charity-ſchools, than the ſuperficial rudiments commonly given them. It is the hands, not the minds of the people, which the ſtate wants; yet does not this ſuggeſtion imply the ſmalleſt intention, of wreſting the plume of honor, given to thoſe curious ſpeculators, who plan improvements for the mind, while the body is ſtarving.

of neceſſity than choice; no artiſt will work, if he has the ſmalleſt reaſon to doubt the ready ſale of his manufacture: 'tis the regular demand, which animates and rewards his toil. The great art of Engliſh workmen appears in their inventing new ſpecies of manufactures, when the demand for the old begins to languiſh. Were our people for half a century, to have their manufactures as warmly protected as thoſe in England, he muſt be bold in conjecture, who ſhould aver, that our habits of idleneſs and drunkenneſs would then be the ſame. In the ſame period it will ſcarcely admit of belief, that the chief art, which has received the foſtering care of the Iriſh government for many years, has been drunkenneſs: thereby for the purpoſes of revenue, corrupting the very ſources of life, induſtry and morality. The corn laws, are not they beneficial? that tillage has greatly increaſed, is unequivocally true; but that it ariſes from a general and natural progreſs of improvement, and yet more from a great increaſe of population is equally certain. Huſbandry is the ſimpleſt, ſo ſure as it was the firſt of the arts: and men, deprived of permanent encouragement to other arts, naturally bend to what a bountiful Providence, as being of moſt general good, has

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alſo made of moſt eaſy acquiſition and knowledge. In Ireland a much greater ratio of its inhabitants cultivate the ground, than of Engliſhmen. Agriculture, it is obvious, as preceding legiſlation, and furniſhing the firſt and moſt neceſſary object to man, requires a very delicate interference and ſupport: even yet imperfectly underſtood, many laws of regulation only fetter its progreſs, and eſpecially as being eſſentially different from the better aſcertained articles of trade and luxury. It is alſo pretty evident, that the linen trade lies under ſupernumerary reſtrictions, which yet rears its encumbered head, and diffuſes a partial plenty thro' the land. we need not dwell on the abſurdity of a whole nation depending on one manufacture, the primary article of which, it is indebted to very diſtant countries for: nor is it neceſſary to aſk, how England would have maintained her proud ſuperiority, if relying on the utmoſt poſſible exertion of a ſingle manufacture. The due conſideration of theſe circumſtances too plainly evinces, how precarious are the beſt ſupports of Iriſh proſperity, and it alſo demonſtrates that idleneſs is not the cauſe, but the conſequence, of a want of different manufactures and of regular employment: men have not ſufficient incitement to accuſtom their children to early habits of labor,

and of learning manufactures, which are precariouſly ſupported. The very eſſence of induſtry requires, and is in fact nothing but, early and habitual labor.

But ſay the advocates for the preſent ſyſtem, is not Ireland advancing rapidly in wealth? Suppoſing and even admitting the fact with ſome limitations, to what ſhall we attribute the cauſe? the truth ſeems to be, that Ireland is advancing, in ſpite of a narrow ſyſtem of governing, and of official corruption, from the ſlow yet gradual progreſs of ſociety; which weak minded politicians with moſt conſummate vanity attribute to their own puny exertions: thus arrogating the diſpenſations of Providence, inſtead of leaving it to our grateful conſideration, that its bleſſings are not wholly converted into poſitive evils: but, beſides the advantage from an increaſe of trade, and wealth being overrated, it is confined to a few conſiderable towns, while the diſtant provinces continue in wretchedneſs without change. In admiring the beautiful ornaments of the Capital, the feeble baſe and ſhrivelled pillars, which ſupport it, are cautiouſly kept from view; yet even in the Capital, miſery exhibits her ſqualid figure in every ſtreet, tho' chiefly confined to the

the unobſerved regions of want: as is too truly evident from its numerous and charitable receptacles of beggary; which while they diſplay a humanity of character in the inhabitants, are libels on the character of the government.

After thus, Gentlemen, with all poſſible plainneſs, ſketching the civil and political ſituation of Ireland, allow me to recall to your view and preſs on your recollection, the only means which can afford adequate relief: the multiplied bleſſings attending a full and perfect repreſentation, are too ſelf evident to be enumerated; one thing only is wanting to enſure it, which yet is not unattainable by men, whoſe boſoms glow with love, not to ſects or parties, but to mankind; not with partial, but with general freedom: friends, brothers, Iriſhmen, children of one univerſal parent, ſay, will not all join in a common bond of union. A main pillar of your religious and political ſalvation is founded on love to your neighbour; and if it be incumbent on individuals to prove their being actuated by ſuch love: and if the national fund of human happineſs receive, as it muſt, an increaſe from the union of individuals in ſuch a cauſe, can each or any of you refuſe to add your quota? my heart tells me you

will not, and your own intereſt confirms it— unanimity?— no, it is not wanting: I have moſt unequivocal proof of you all being animated with the ſame patriotic fervor.* A certain quaintneſs of behaviour, a ſomewhat like civil diffidence, ſupported by an ill judg'd ſacrifice of popular opinion to certain reſpected characters, reſtrains you only from opening the arms of undeceiving confidence to all who bear the name of Iriſhmen: from you and each of you, we hope to learn at the approaching criſis, to which diſcontents both public and private

* The zeal, ſo recently manifeſted by the corporation of the Capital, cannot be an exception. It is one proof only among a thouſand others, of the ill effects reſulting from thoſe excluſive bodies, ſtiled corporations, where opinions are governed by perſonal intereſt, and where impaſſioned declamation aſſumes the palm of eloquence. For the citizens of Dublin I wiſh to give teſtimony of very high reſpect; but it cannat be offenſive to preſume, that in a queſtion which involved the happineſs of millions, and perhaps the peace of Ireland, more reſpect ought to be paid, more caution uſed, and more time allowed, than what might be given to the payment of a coach-makers bill, or direction for the feſtive board. The corporation, where the maſs of citizens do not chooſe to aſſemble, may ſuppoſe itſelf competent to convey the ſenſe of the city: yet, allowing it all due weight, the people whom it attempted to check, have a charter of ſomewhat older date than that of the metropolis, and conveyed down without any obſcurity of character, and which a law, ſuperior to all of human origin, calls upon them to defend.——To the glorious 21 of the 19th ult. I bear moſt ſincere reſpect.

vate are haſtening, that the title of Iriſhman will join with the already immortalized friends of humankind, and viſit poſterity with increaſing honors. While the ſun of ſcience advances with a ſlow and ſteady light, chaſing the gloom which clogs man's intellectual nature, from the noble few of ſpeculative minds: of more extenſive and rapid diffuſion, does the genius of freedom excite the noble many of active and willing natures: often impetuous and terrible, while threatning her foes with vengeance; yet often paſſing in ſeeming ſeverity:—Thus tempeſts, which ſeem to ſhake the earth's centre, only reſtore to nature its juſt equilibrium and power; — but neither numerous nor dreaded are the foes of freedom, and why? becauſe freedom is to man, in every ſtage of ſociety, between the moſt ſavage and moſt refined, a poſitive neceſſary of life, and inferior only to food and raiment. For certain, a great part of mankind ſeem not to feel the want of freedom; but the ſame holds good againſt their ſcanty ſupplies of food, from wretched and oppreſſive governments, often amidſt a profuſion of nature's choiceſt bounties: and we even know a country, without any natural defect of climate; or any moral diſqualification of the people, ſuffering a kind of crippled manhood,

hood, the mouth open and the hands ty'd up, attached to the ſoil, and not to the community, and barely ſupporting an animal, but in no ſhape enjoying a ſocial exiſtence.

As the neceſſity of a remedy, ſo long and devoutly wiſhed for, prompt, ardent, efficacious, becomes hourly more preſſing, on whom can we rely? of the peoples advocates, the far greater number preſs forward on the road to wealth and power, not with hopeleſs zeal: popular favor is a good paſſport to fame; though few retain a niche in the temple. How trifling, to make the ſimple removal of one adminiſtration, a chief article of union for political bodies! how weak, to attempt committing the people in a meer perſonal conteſt with a viceroy. The baſe is too feeble and too limited for the great ſuperſtructure of national union. If then we are agreed, that the integrity and abilities of the firſt characters, afford not a change of meaſures of ſufficient permanency; and if the repeal of a few oppreſſive laws, and the attainment of certain ſtated ſpecific meaſures, be alſo inſufficient, ſhall we not in the fullneſs of time look for a revelation? 'tis the command of the Deity we obey, when ſtruggling for freedom: his firſt law to the firſt man was "be free", and the firſt act of man's nature proved the exerciſe of it. It is time to ſuperadd to the wiſh of indolence ſome active conſtitutional meaſure: conſtitutional meaſure? revelation? by revelation here is meant

meant a general declaration of the people's will, and every act of the people is a conſtitutional meaſure. but a people never have occaſion to act; a ſimple expreſſion of their will ſuffices, for who ſhall reſiſt? their confidence once withdrawn from their ſervants, however elevated in power, how abject and helpleſs becomes their ſituation? To thoſe who view with crabbed jealouſy, an extenſion of freedom to their equals, we only ſay, a general good is an object too vaſt for little minds — like as to a weakneſs of the viſual organ, correſponds a limited ſphere of action — the remaining few, unprincipled enemies to every ſpecies and degree of liberty, are too inſignificant to be either feared or hated — the torrent riſes not to overwhelm the puny inſect that plays upon its ſurface. Petition, whom? not that body, which receives its importance, its ſtation and its power from us; ſmaller bodies, as in towns and counties, on ſubjects of a local nature, may, not unbecomingly addreſs in that ſtile; but an entire nation to beg as a boon, for liberty to live, to enjoy the rights of conſcience, and other impreſcriptive rights, is ſuperlatively abſurd. *

Let

* Concerning the language or form, in which a body of people ſhould expreſs their deſires, whenſoever inclined to complain of grievances: or to change or correct, what appears to them, defects in the conſtitution of the country; it is barely neceſſary to adopt one or the other of theſe two propoſitions: either the houſe of commons act for themſelves, and of right ought to be independent

Let but the nation (it cannot be repeated too frequently, nor enforced too ſtrongly) be unanimous, and it has no favour to aſk, for a national good muſt ever follow national union: a difference in the mode may be eaſily ſurmounted, ſo there be a general concurrence to the ſame end; yet in a requiſition for withheld rights, what more than minute differences can there be as to the means?

Gentlemen

independent of the people; or, they are bound to conſult the good of the people. If independent, the members of that legiſlative body are unqueſtionably right, to baſk in court-ſunſhine, to receive, and even ſolicit penſions and the emoluments of office: under the ſame impreſſion they act conſiſtently, when commending the ſubmiſſion, with which the people ought patiently to expect any favors they chooſe to grant, and when ridiculing the rights of Man, as fitted for a ſtate of nature only, not for the preſent age of refinement. With ſuch too, nothing is more natural than their wiſh to maintain the preſent aſcendancy, *i. e.* to preſerve their preſent emoluments; nothing ſo conſiſtent, as their abhorrence to whatever looks like a reform, or a change of the preſent ſyſtem, which would moſt likely cut away thoſe very emoluments: and for reaſons equally valid, do hungry and noiſy expectants view, with jaundiced eye, every attempt to innovate on thoſe ſpoils of office, they hope ſooner or later to ſhare in.

But ſhould the ſecond propoſition correſpond with the ſpirit and letter of the conſtitution, as originally deſigned: and if to this be joined the ſuffrages of reaſon, juſtice, and humanity: then as demonſtrably are the houſe of commons truſtees for the people, not principals, and by receiving penſions and the emoluments of office, they corruptly transfer their truſt, and in the place of ſerving, become traitors to the community.

Gentlemen — to whom this addreſs is peculiarly devoted, it is to your inſtant conſideration that I preſs a reform in the Iriſh commons. To ſay that you will take the lead in this important buſineſs, is not undeſervedly allotting you the poſt of honor: and ought to be expected from men, who hold in equal contempt, the ſmiles and the frowns of a corrupt court. a variety of meaſures may be propoſed, perhaps not intentionally, to diſtract, to divide, to weaken your zeal, which therefore will require ſome part of your attention to counteract. * To aid your wiſhes, to concentre public opinion into a focus, and to give it due energy, no plan promiſes ſo much, as the formation of ſocieties or clubs. there are few towns or villages that cannot muſter half a dozen independent — congenial ſouls, men

 who

* A moſt ſuſpicious circumſtance of this nature, appears from the recent conduct of ſome men, who formerly oppoſed and even now continue to oppoſe, the corruptions of government, on a few ſpecific points; yet are highly inimical to the idea of equal freedom. When ſuch ſpeak of maintaining the preſent aſcendancy of church and ſtate, they ought at the ſame time to reconcile the inconſiſtency of oppoſing for many years that very political aſcendency, they now wiſh to ſupport. In this queſtion the Peer and the Commoner are equally pledged: and if right in ſupporting the preſent conſtitution, their conduct for ſeveral years, has been a libel on common ſenſe and common juſtice.

But the Roman Catholics have little to fear from the preſent menaces of weakneſs and corruption: a cool perſeverance will and muſt give them ſucceſs — for their cauſe is that of juſtice.

who entertain the god-like idea of equal freedom, and equal happineſs. *There* opinions may be canvaſſed with the boldneſs of men, yet with the civil attention due to neighbours. The coldeſt heart expands by communication of ſentiment: the coldeſt bodies ſparkle by colliſion. Above all, let there be an exterior communication each with the other, untill, as the circle enlarges, it approximate with the Capital. It is an error of the firſt claſs, which ſuppoſes politics to be an obſcure ſcience; compared with other branches of knowledge it is of eaſy acquirement. Of natural bodies, for example, we can obſerve their exterior form, and ſome of their relations to each other: and amidſt the ingenious attempts daily making to diſcover more of their properties, we find experiment ſucceed experiment, new facts oppoſed to old ones, and a conſequent ſucceſſion of opinions founded on thoſe facts, which leave on the mind a painful impreſſion of endleſs change; but how different the caſe in political knowledge, in which, what includes our duty is clear and of eaſy apprehenſion. without loſing ſight of the main object, different ſubjects of converſation may, at ſuch meetings, be broached; ſuited to that love of variety, and that deſire for knowledge, ſo natural to man; it is by ſuch means that exerciſe and habit improve that faculty, which nature gave to man, to think and act for himſelf: it is thus, public opinion will, from a chaotic ſtate, aſſume

aſſume a new form and an animated ſoul: then will that union — glorious æra — how much do I anticipate the happy period; the mind, unclogged of its frail companion, preſſes forward, and ſnatches from futurity its preſent joys. Even now, Iriſhmen, under all their oppreſſion, participate in every event, which gives freedom to nations, which exalts and ennobles humanity; * but then, he will exultingly cry "I alſo am free."

Away then — with diſtinctions of every kind, ſave thoſe of free and of bondſmen: to animoſities ever ill timed, but now peculiarly ſo, let us chaunt an eternal requiem. Our God is no reſpecter of perſons; and freedom, His faireſt boon to man, the greateſt known object of His creative power, is equally founded on the broad baſis of good will to men. — "moſt willing ſpirits that promiſe noble ſervice."— well do I know the willing ſpirit which animates you — cordially do I join, do I rivet myſelf to your fortunes — we are not yet bankrupts in hope — let us but make it a common cauſe — a partial one only can fail. A bond, or ſome ſuch expreſſive mark of our union, can include all: the individuals, encreaſing in ſtrength as in number, may

* Witneſs the elegant addreſs of the Volunteers at Belfaſt.

may become too great for personal intercourse; but the assemblage, glorious as what fills the great expanse of nature, will neither be too strong for human intelligence, nor too unwieldy for the grasp of human affection.

A freeman of Dublin.